

Message Text

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51

ACTION EA-14

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 VO-03 AID-20 DRC-01 /153 W

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R 291114Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8608

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18588

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AINR, TH

SUBJECT: SEKSAN; FIST

REF: A) BANGKOK 17851, B) BANGKOK 17557, C) BANGKOK 18300

SUMMARY: SEKSAN PRASERTKUL, SEEKING AN ORGANIZATIONAL EXPRESSION FOR HIS ACTIVISM, CREATED THE FREE THAMMASAT GROUP (FTG) IN EARLY NOVEMBER. HE IS ALSO THE PRIME MOVER BEHIND THE FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDENTS OF THAILAND (FIST), AN ALLIANCE OF ACTIVIST GROUPS FROM FIVE UNIVERSITIES. FIST INAUGURAL ACTIVITIES CONSISTED OF A RALLY AND "HYDE PARK" SPEECHES AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY URGING THE PUBLIC TO COOPERATE IN CONSERVING GASOLINE AND OIL SUPPLIES. END SUMMARY.

1. UNABLE TO OBTAIN A POSITION OF POWER WITHIN THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT), ACTIVIST SEKSAN PRASERTKUL CREATED THE FREE THAMMASAT GROUP (FTG) IN
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EARLY NOVEMBER (REF A AND B). SEKSAN IS CHAIRMAN OF THE TWELVE

MAN FTG EXECUTIVE COMOBTTTEE. THE FTG ANNOUNCED ITS GOALS AS: (1) PRESERVATION OF DEMOCRACY, BUDDHISM, AND THE MONARCHY; (2) DEVELOPMENT OF A POPULAR POWER BASE FOR A DEMOCRATIC THAILAND; (3) STUDY OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND PROPOSAL OF SOLUTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT; AND (4) MAINTENANCE OF A NON-PARTISAN STANCE. INITIAL FTG PROJECTS INCLUDE A NIGHT SCHOOL TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC IN DEMOCRACY AND "HYDE PARK" DISCUSSIONS AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ON SUNDAYS.

2. THE "BANGKOK WORLD" DISCLOSED NOVEMBER 16 THAT INDEPENDENT STUDENT GROUPS DECIDED TO MERGE INTO THE FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDENTS OF THAILAND (FIST). THE INITVSU UNIVERSITIES REPRESENTED ARE THAMMASAT, CHULALONGKORN, ALKASETSART, CHIANG MAI, AND RAMKHAMHAENG. THE FIST CHAIRMAN IS SEKSAN. VICE CHAIRMAN PREECHA PONGCHAROENKUL IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT FIST HAS ABOUT 100 MEMBERS, WHICH IS PROBABLY A FAIRLY RELIABLE FIGURE SINCE INDEPENDENT, ACTIVIST GROUPS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A SMALL PART OF THE STUDENT POPULATION. THE INTERVIEW WITH PREECHA DESCRIBED THE ORGANIZATION'S STRICT MEMBERSHIP RULES WHICH SHOULD PERPETUATE ITS NARROW ELITISM.

3. FIST INAUGURAL CEREMONIES WERE HELD AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY NOVEMBER 25 WHEN SEKSAN INTRODUCED THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. THE "BANGKOK WORLD" QUOTED SEKSAN NOVEMBER 26 AS SAYING THAT FIST EXISTED FOR SOME TIME BUT THAT IT DID NOT ORGANIZE FOR FEAR OF GOVERNMENT REPRESSION. HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE "SHADOW" FIST HAD CONDUCTED SOCIAL WORK IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS UPCOUNTRY AND IN THE BANGKOK SLUMS.

4. FIST INAUGURAL SPEAKERS URGED THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO CONSERVE OIL SUPPLIES. THE FIRST FIST PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS CONDEMNED THE SWEDEN-BASED THAI LIBERATION MOVEMENT FOR ITS RECENT ATTACK ON THE KING (PARA 5 BANGKOK 18299), AND SUGGESTED WAYS

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THE GOVERNMENT COULD IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE PEOPLE. THESE SUGGESTIONS INCLUDED MORE FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME, DISCOURAGEMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS FROM ENGAGING IN PRIVATE BUSINESS, AND CONCENTRATION ON RURAL RATHER THAN MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT.

5. IN THE MIDST OF THESE ORGANIZATIONAL MOVES, SEKSAN RECEIVED HIS VISA FOR THE UNITED STATES, AND PLANS TO

DEPART NOVEMBER 29 FOR A SPEAKING TOUR (BANGKOK 18357).
THIS WEEKEND THE CONSTITUENT UNIVERSITIES OF THE NSCT VOTE
TO ELECT A NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (REF C).

6. COMMENT: SEKSAN'S DEPARTURE JUST BEFORE THE
IMPORTANT NSCT ELECTION MAY INDICATE EITHER HIS CONFIDENCE
THAT HE OR ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS MAY OBTAIN AN NSCT
LEADERSHIP POSITION, OR THAT SEKSAN HAS FORESAKEN THE
NSCT FOR HIS SMALLER, BUT MORE SATISFYING FIST. FIST
WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE ITSELF HEARD DESPITE ITS LIMITED
PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES. IT WILL PROBABLY BECOME ONE
OF THE MAJOR STUDENT CRITICS OF THE SANYA GOVERNMENT AND
THE UNITED STATES. FIST ACTIVISM, HOWEVER, COULD FORFEIT
VITAL PUBLIC SUPPORT NECESSARY TO KEEP FIST FROM BEING
MORE THAN AN ISOLATED NUISANCE.
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